

CROCKFORD-HOUSE,

A RHAPSODY.

IN TWO CANTOS.

— tacitus pasci si possit Corvus, haberet
Plus dapis, et tunc multo minus, invidiæque.

HOR.

It yonder Crow would build and feed in quiet,
He 'd have less noise, less envy—and more diet.

A RHYMER IN ROME.

She has her praise.—Now mark a spot or two
Which so much beauty would do well to cleanse.

COWPER.

LONDON.

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

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CANTO I.



CROCKFORD-HOUSE.

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OUT as up St. James's hill I
Push along for Piccadilly,
There what Còckney-crowds I meet,
Gazing, wondering in the street
At the chasm in front of *White's*,¹
Strangest, fearfullest of sights!
Late at night, at early dawning,
Still "at alteration yawning,"

Like a mouth in boxing bout,
Half its teeth in front knocked out ;
Like a breach by miners able
Just reported practicable.

Where is now the brick and wood
Which so lately in it stood ?
Was it by an earthquake shaken,
Or by sudden flames o'ertaken ?
Has the word been given for storming,
Is that warlike feat performing ?
Have the Radicals attacked it,
Or the Vice-Suppressors sacked it ?
Has it yielded to a blow,
Dealt from Ragget's rival bow ?

Has our Lord the King's Attorney
'Gainst it armed Sir Richard Birnie,
Him who with his stout police
Levies war, to keep the peace?

Have the Saints dislodged the sinners
From their den of dice and dinners?
Have they, in their burning zeal,
Striven to set Destruction's seal
On the spot where, night and day,
Smoked the altars raised to Play,
Braving in their onset bold
Satan in his strongest hold,
Where their fevered fancy draws
Imps with pitchforks, horns, and claws,

Up to earth, in countless legions,
Swarming from the lower regions ?

Tell me, any Muse who deigns,
Since yon darksome gulf contains
Nought but rubbish,—jutting boards,
Mortar, brick-bats, hods, and hordes,
By alternate rain and gust
Drenched with mud, or choked with dust,
Say what buildings, bad or good,
Once within its confines stood ?

Here were raised, 'tis years ago,
More for use, I ween, than shew,
Kindred houses, five or so ;

Such as, in those tasteless days,
London-builders loved to raise ;
Men whose barren fancy ran
Always on the self-same plan ;
From whose ceilings, windows, doors,
Chimneys, passages, and floors,
Pride of many a smart abode
North and south of Oxford-Road,
You might instance in a lecture
Every fault of architecture.
Ten their rooms, their windows three.
All were fashion'd to agree
Like the seven Miss Flamboroughs,
Who, as Wakefield's Vicar shews,¹

Clothed alike, on canvas stand,
Each an orange in her hand.

Crockford——but some gawk or quiz
Here may ask who Crockford is?
Who, forsooth ! The trump of Fame
Seldom celebrates a name
Through the Country, or in Town,
Of more exquisite renown.
All his coaxing manners praise,
All confess his *winning* ways.
Though 'tis plainly seen with one eye
He's a dab at making money,
Still his taste (one must commend it),
Next to getting, is to spend it.

Let them hoard their coin who love it,
Crockford has a soul above it.
Reckless he of *cons* and *pros*,
Lightly as it comes, it goes,
Still ungrudged and unrepented,
So his *members* are contented.

He can boast of many debtors,
Every one among his *bettors*.
Never of a score afraid,
Always “blushing to be paid,”
’Tis a luxury to owe him.—
None, if happening *not* to know him ;
None their ignorance should own,
Arguing themselves unknown.

They, perhaps, who love him, wish
He had never dealt in fish ;
But, excepting when he nabs
Higher prey by means of *crabs*,[†]
Ne'er he'll deal in it again,
Fisher *now* become of men ;
One who still, I own it freely,
Hooks and nets them so genteelly,
That they feel it, as they ought,
Quite a pleasure to be caught.
There. You have your answer, quiz :
Now, you know who Crockford is.

Muse, a couplet more or less
Matters not, but don't digress.

You've the story to relate
Of these houses and their fate;
You, if any one, can tell
Wherefore, and by whom they fell.

Crockford, voting Bolton-Row
On a sudden, *vastly low*,
And that gentlemen should meet
Only in St. James's Street,
Broke his quarters up, and here
Entered on a fresh career.
Promising the scene, and new.—
First he purchased houses two;
Then, no sooner said than done,
Two were blended into one.

Next, in these were heaped together
Glass and gilding, silk and leather,
All displayed, as Fame avouches,
In such mirrors, chairs, and couches,
That Morell alone or Tatham
Worthy were to celebrate 'em.

There, while softly perfumed vapours
Hovered round the lamps and tapers,
In whose beams the Muse might slumber,
Ere she reckoned up their number,
All was splendid, all was bright,
Basking in a blaze of light
Such as emulates the Sun—
Still but half his work was done.

Eyes were pleased, but Crockford knew
Stomachs claim their pleasures too ;
And that nine, at least, in ten,
Duly polled, of mortal men
Think, no matter what the treat,
'Tis but fudge—unless they eat.

Hastening, having bribed the sight,
To engage the appetite,
First, he turned his conjuring book
For a spell to raise a cook.
Thrice invoked, an artist came
Not unworthy of the name ;

One who with a hand of fire
Struck the culinary lyre,
And through all its compass ran :
Taste and judgment marked the man .
Ever various, ever new,
Was this heav'n-born *Cordon bleu*.

Next, he waved his golden wand.
Earth and sea, at his command,
Gave their choicest treasures up,
That his customers might sup. .
And his judgment was, in this,
Clearly not so much amiss ;

Thirst and hunger, as they say,
Being mortal foes of Play.
But as high celestial blood
Reckons on ambrosial food,
Every luxury was there
Deemed (to borrow from Voltaire)
Superflu si necessaire.
Cease, ye pedants, cease to gull us
With the suppers of Lucullus,
In his favorite room, the' Apollo ;—
Here *Crockfordus* beat him hollow !

Art revived, when nearly lost,
By his nightly pains and cost ;

Art which prized so much of late is,
Precious art of supping *gratis*,
Refuge of the' undinner'd, hail !
May'st thou never, never fail !
Found by thee in food and wine,
Marvel not if some decline
Or, perchance, forget to dine.
Dinners but inflame the' amount
Of a yearly club-account.
Here, whoever sups may crow :
Here, we neither pay nor owe.

Midnight sounds !—"Tis twelve o'clock '
See, like pigeons, how they flock

From the opera, or the play,
Or from t' other side the way.
Some, when gossip scarce requites
Those who linger there, from *White's* ;
Others, little to the cook's ease,
From *The Travellers'* or *Brooks's*.
Pleased they ply the four-pronged fork,
Pleased they free the fettered cork,
Where, in rich abundance stored,
Every dainty crowns the board,
Heaped together, to entice
Squeamish tastes. at any price.

Some their hunger ill conceal,
Rent upon a solid meal.

Others carelessly discuss

Early peas or 'sparagus :

'Sparagus, which, passion-stricken

For the young and tender chicken,

And, by pitying knife set free

From the fields of Battersea,

Crowd, in hundreds, to be near

What they love so fondly, here.

• Some, to slake their glass of sherry,

Dally with the hot-house cherry ;

Some at strawberries take their fling,

Which the stout-built wenches bring,

While their arms in cadence swing ;

While, with firm yet cautious tread,
Nicely balanced on her head
Each conveys her fragrant load
Safe along the Brentford-road.

Scarcely could the *gourmand* wish.
Or imagine any dish,
But 'twas here, at the command
Of his eager eyes and hand.
While Champagne, in close array,
Pride of *Rheims* and *Epernay*,
Not in bottles, but in dozens,
(Think of *that*, ye country-cousins !)
Stood, of every growth and price,
“ Peeping forth ” its tubs of ice.

Hungering now no more, nor thirsting,
See them with impatience bursting !
Now to business from repose
Briskly every creature goes.
Play, with magnet-like attraction,
Bids them all prepare for action.
Play alone can pleasure give ;
Only while they play, they live.
Each who is not at his post ^s
Thinks a dozen throws are lost,
And, in fancy, thumps, while able,
Heavily the absent table.

Follow to the room adjoining ;
Now begins the work of coining.

“ Now,” says Crockford, “ ye who hanker
After gain, behold your banker !
Draw upon me, every man,
Freely draw for what you—can.
You must suffer me, ’tis true,
Now and then to draw on you ;
Yet so soft shall be my *pull*
On your purse, when over-full,
Still so gentle shall you find it,
Ten to one you ’ll never mind it.”

Thus—as Eastern stories go,
In Ceylōn or Bornco,

Isles beneath the tropic breeze,
Sparkling o'er the Indian seas,
Or, what suits the likeness most,
On the Gold and Ivory-Coast,
Which, as Slavery's annals tell,
Is th' epitome of Hell,
Thus the Vampire,⁶ giant-bat,
When, perchance, he finds a *flat*,
One who on his back reposes,
And is fast asleep, or dozes,
O'er the victim gently bending,
And each monstrous wing extending,
To secure his favorite food,
Fans him—while he sucks his blood.

See where light from over-head
In one steady blaze is spread
On the soft and cheerful green
Of the table where they lean !
Think not Nature has the start,
Here, or any where, of Art.
No.—Let bards, and welcome, sing
Green, the livery of Spring ;
Here 'tis far more bright and gay,
As the livery of Play.

What is garden, grove, or mead,
To yon oval board, o'erspread
With its smooth and spotless cloth,
Where (to tell their names I'm loth)

Commoners, and not a few peers,
Hover round yon pair of *Croupiers*,
Who, all primness and decorum,
Heaps of counters piled before 'em,
Sit, with loins each night grown weaker,
Sit—like Theseus, or the Spaker.⁷

Nor suppose that, partial grown,
They are charmed with *green* alone ;
That no form or shape is able
To attract them, but the table.
No,—believe me, wondering Muse,
Here are other shapes and hues,
Which with extacy they boast of,
And delight to make the most of.

Ne'er has ivory neck or shoulder
So enchanted the beholder,
When, perchance, the parted robe
Half betrays each rising globe,
As the ivory cubes that lie
Paired beneath the punter's eye,
Cubes in matchless beauty drest,
Or in motion, or at rest :
Ne'er was any "mole, cinque-spotted,"
Like the cinques upon them dotted.

Talk of Woman's red and white !
Can *they* minister delight
Like the counters in our view,
Glowing with the self-same hue,

Or which, o'er the verdant plain,
As the *nick* succeeds the *main*,
Clad in every colour, pass
Like a rainbow over grass.

Tell me—(but you scorn to tell, Beaus,)
Wherefore, when you shake your elbows,
Or with confidence and pluck,
Or despairing of your luck,
By such various paths you press
To the wished-for goal, success?—
Mark the timid and the brave.
These how lively ! Those how grave !
Some in silence lose or win,
Others deal in noise and din.

One the table loudly knocks,
Rattling well Pandora's box,
As a dose, before 'tis taken,
Long and lustily is shaken.
T' other, by the best advice,
Slowly dribbles out the dice.

Then, how strange a coalition
Fancy forms with Superstition !
When for *nine* or *ten* they strive;
When they aim at *four* or *five*,
Each adopts a different throw ;—
Hard for high, and soft for low.
Voting every one a fool
Who neglects so plain a rule !

Be it, wise ones, as you will.
Chance is sovereign here, not skill.
No design have I to quiz,
But, beyond all question, 'tis
Six of one, and six's brother
Half a dozen of the other.
For while all, devoted to her,
Soberly or briskly woo her,
Fortune deems not either mood,
In itself, or bad or good.
Hoodwinked she, and much a rover,
Yields in turn to every lover,
Poor or wealthy, great or small,—
And, in turn, rejects them all.

See ! the wayward Goddess nods !
Nicks and mains, and bets and odds,
Swell and shrink full many a hoard
On the wonder-working board,
While the ivory tokens fly
Swift as weaver's shuttle, by,
Pushed or gathered, as they go,
By the *Croupier's* brisk *rateau*.

Precious Ivory ! Those who win
Deem thee fairer than the skin
Mantling o'er the face and breast
Of the *blonde* they love the best.
Thee with rapture they behold,
Darling deputy of gold,

Which, to make the system sure,

Here, enjoys a sinecure.

But the hapless wight who *loses*

Every praise to thee refuses.

If there 's any thing, in sooth,

Sharper than a serpent's tooth,

'Tis, the loser freely grants,

'Tis, alas ! the elephant's.

Few indeed recover quite

From ~~the~~ symptoms of that bite.

First they 're seized with consol-selling,

Judgment-signing, timber-felling.

Then, as heightens the disease,

Mortgages, annuities,

And, what passes all endurance,
Heavy, merciless insurance,
Crush with overwhelming weight
Mind, and body, and estate.
Skilful men, when these come on,
Deem the patient nearly gone.
Jews and Gentiles give him over :
So, since *here* he can't recover,
Off he slyly slips to Dover,
Takes to steam, nor feels he rallies
Till he's on the pier at Calais.

Muse, enough.—To dwell 'twere folly
On a scene so melancholy.

Though, to hear and see what's shocking,
Crowds on crowds are always flocking,
Such catastrophes, 'tis certain,
Should be kept behind the curtain ;
Though they happen, now and then,
And, *by hazard*, may again.

See, apart where Crockford sits,
Or parades the room by fits,
Calmly, steadily surveying
All the ups and downs of playing !
Reckless of the raging battle,
Reckless how the dice may rattle,
Who is throwing out, or in,
Who may lose or who may win,

Whether they have blanks or prizes,

All he equally excises.

“ What has he with loss to do ?

Sons of Play, ’twas made for you.”

As, when, by repletion bred,

Blood determines to the head,

And the patient, night and day,

Dreads a fatal *plethora*,

Surgeons, with a ready lancet,

On his legs again the man set ;

So, when money, like a rocket,

Briskly rises in the pocket,

Threatening ills like this or worse,

From an overflowing purse,

Crockford comes with gentle *pull*.—

Lo ! it is no longer full.

All superfluous gold and paper

Quickly vanishing like vapour,

Drains the sources of expense

Down to modest competence.

Easy and of short duration,

Mostly, is this operation,

And if subjects young and strong

Sometimes find it sharp and long,

Let them reckon up the scrapes

He who suffers it escapes !

All the evils which oppress

Wealthy men from wealth's excess ;

All the petty plagues that fret,
All the dangers that beset,
All the tempters that importune
Wretches—with too large a fortune !

Nibbling, nibbling by degrees,
Like a rat that gnaws a cheese,
Like a child whose grinders make
Inroads round a sugared cake,
He, whatever the event,
Rests “in measureless content.”
Can you in his conscious face
Fail the mighty Lord to trace
Of the magic *Deuce and Ace*?

All his loss that throw retrieves ;
If 'tis for him, he receives ;
If against him, never pays ;
Such are Crockford's means and ways.
Thus his victims bear the' infliction
Of another *Bank-restriction*.
Thus he weaves the nightly spell
Which controls the depths of Hell !

Should you, with a view to fence
'Gainst its fatal influence
And to parry the disaster,
Have a mind to back the *caster*,
Plain, unerring calculation
Bids you dread a worse vexation,

Since *Demoivre* neatly shews
That, whene'er a caster throws,
For that hopeful chance to win, he
Parts with fourpence in a guinea !

Thus the punter (though I must rate
Those but lazy who illustrate
Aught by metaphors so cribbed) is
Caught 'twixt Scylla and Charybdis.
Cased in armour, cap-a-pié,
Thus, whate'er the' attack may be,
Crockford may defy the table.
Thus, he is invulnerable.
Ev'n if (as Achilles' heel
Fated was, at last, to feel)

He should suffer from a wound,
Far from mortal, 'twould be found
But a wholesome loss of blood,
For his constitution 's good.

Thus, when fickle Fortune fancies
To decide against the chances,
And there's, now and then, a run
On his bank, the more the fun.
All the backward, now grown brisk,
Little care what stakes they risk ;
Those who never played before
Venture much, and gamblers more.
So insurers, oft in doubt
How to feel when fires break out,

Grudge not paying houseless men
For their losses, now and then,
Who, thus frightened, think it wise
To renew their policies ;
While the uninsured, by scores,
Cluster round the office-doors.

But, with envy while we view him,
Let us own, in justice to him,
That, whate'er may be his profit,
Crockford makes no secret of it.
Every customer allows it ;
He to all the world avows it ;
Be it much or little, so 'tis ;
All are purchasers on notice.

Idle sorrow, vain repenting,
When the victims are consenting,
Who, inflamed, excited thus,
By their darling *stimulus*,
Paying, to their heart's content,
Little more than *two per cent*,
Never grudge the price a tittle,
Wondering how it costs so little !

But as Man was never meant
(So 't would seem) to be content ;
As some void within the breast
Still left aching, murders rest ;
Crockford, prospering thus, and grown
Tired of letting well alone,

Scorns his former fair condition,
Mastered by that mad ambition
Which though groveling souls abuse,
Kindred spirits must excuse ;
Since the noblest minds agree
In that last infirmity.

Now, his pride disdains the scene
Of his past success, as mean.
“ Many were its charms, ’tis granted ;
But, when *elbow-room* is wanted,
Premises so small are hateful.”—
Thus it is, when Man’s ungrateful !

Houses twain suffice no more.

No,—he must and will have *four* ;

And, precisely as those gay things,

Petted children, treat their play-things,

In his hurry to enjoy them,

Grown impatient to destroy them,

Has a crotchet in his head,

To adorn yon gulf, 'tis said,

With a Palace in their stead !

From the gains of many seasons,

Thus, misguided man, he reasons.—

“ Say that, of a given size,

Houses yield a given prize,

Make them twice as big—I touch
(Witness Cocker) twice as much.”

But, when premises are hollow,
False conclusions ever follow.
Oft such arguments conceal
Guns with springs, and traps of steel.
Though 'tis strange to find a trick
Lurking in arithmetic,
Strange, that fallacies should be
Even in the rule-of-three,
Oft, 'tis clearer than the Sun,
Two and two make—only one !
Truth concealed from ages past,
Scarce revealed to ours, at last.

But 'tis time to be unyoking.
See the horses' collars smoking !
You, the humble *pair* who spurn,
Used to "*first and second turn*,"
Who, as on *with four* you rattle,
Vote that mine are sorry cattle,
Know I'm loth to overrate them ;
But, if here allowed to bait them,
They shall travel, I'll engage,
Lame or not, another stage.

Reader, shall their strength be tried ?
Will you, metaphor aside,
If, perchance, you have not guessed
What's to follow, learn the rest ?

Will you hear the' unfinished story

Of aspiring Crockford's glory ?

Ere my hand the veil withdraws

Let me but a moment pause,

And, recruited, I'm the man to

Tell it, in another Canto.

CANTO II.

CROCKFORD-HOUSE.

CANTO II.

ROUSE your spirits, Muse of mine.
Though the feeblest of the Nine,
There's no saying how 'twould hurt me,
Goddess, should you now desert me.
Since so lovingly we've travelled
On together, don't be gruelled,
But conduct a grateful friend
Safely to his journey's end;
Clear awhile your clouded brow,
And, if ever, help me now.

In some tiny shape again
Settle on my Bramah-pen,
Or, still kinder, near me stand,
Large as life, and there command
All the motions of my hand,
Lest the bard's unworthy song
Do the matchless Hero wrong.

Tell me, when o'erweening pride
Lured him to a scene untried,
When it hurried him astray
From a safe and noiseless way,
To the dangerous heights of Play,

Tell me what the valiant Cid
Of St. James's, Crockford, did.
How he spurred his desperate soul
Onward to the destined goal.

Thanks to many a luckless caster,
Houses *four* now called him master.
Still (since never mortal gained
All he wished) a *fifth* remained,
Where the MEN OF RUB-A-DUB,
Left without a foe to drub,
Long had held their peaceful club;
And, disdaining to be sold,
Spurned our Hero's proffered gold.

Strange, when soldiers disobey,
And refuse to move for pay !
Crockford, in a case so new,
Puzzled felt what next to do ;
But, though formed for soft persuasion
More than open bold invasion,
Driven at last to change his course,
Foiled at fair means, took to force.
As some " losel," to possess
Her who scorns his soft caress,
Long in vain of money lavish,
Wickedly resolves to ravish.

Thus he on the luckless building
Forced the pill without the gilding.

Baffled and enrag'd to find it
Curbed his fancy, and confined it,
He attacked and undermined it.
Armed with pickaxe, crow, and spade,
Such a rent this *Casca* made,
That, as dawned the wintry day,
Rocked awhile with side-long sway,
Joists, and floors, and beams gave way.
Every story, every wall,
Nodding, tottered to its fall,
Ousting husbands, children, wives,
Just in time to save their lives.

Many a neighbour by the shock
Startled, woke at seven o'clock.

Many a stranger heard from far, a
Sound like that of Niagāra.
Haunts beloved of fife and drum,
Down, in thunder, down you come,
And with ruin far and wide
Strew the gulf on every side !

Passenger, I need not ask,
Would it be an easy task
Now, to trace a feature clubbish,
In yon heap of dust and rubbish.
Ne'er before had household-gods
Struggled with such fearful odds ;
By the sudden revolution,
Worse than sheriff's execution,

Scarce was left within the house
Shelter for a man or mouse ;
Reft of every stick within it,
'Twas unfurnished in a minute ;
While, perchance, some broker sly
Marked the goods, in passing by,
Thus projected, with amazement,
Longing for a fair appraisement.
While, in spite of many a prop,
Hoby trembled for the shop
Where his matchless boots are sold,
Nearly for their weight in gold !

Is it thus that Fate rewards
Deeds like yours, ye dauntless Guards ?

Must you, bearded in your camp
By a foe of Crockford's stamp,
See him in your quarters dwell,
In your very citadel?
Must your trials never cease,
Spared in war, to fall in peace?

Yet, while, club-less, you bemoan
Walls so suddenly o'erthrown,
Gratitude should check your tongue;
For, had such a mine been sprung
At an earlier hour or later,
~~By that merciless Abater,~~
Had the Fates, his will obeying,
Caught you dining, supping, playing,

Neither fortitude nor flight
Had availed you—Men of might,
’Twould have sealed your doom outright !
All had perished, flesh and bones,
Maimed and lifeless, on the stones,
All from cards or billiards hurled
Headlong to another world !

Thalaba, thou Arch-destroyer,
Do, consult a clever lawyer.
Let him be an able varlet,
For the Red-coats must have *Scarlet*.
Therefore, to avert your doom,
Be advised, and “ buy a *Brougham*.”

One who's never to be bought
But in cases where he ought,
Where, I fancy, those who try him
Find it well worth while to buy him.

You may laugh at such a trespass,
But 'twill never with the Mess pass.
Law, like war, affords an action ;
Guards-men, though a fighting faction,
May contrive to calm their fury.
With the verdict of a Jury.
Mischief done there's no undoing ;
Vengeance in their breast is brewing,
And, whatever you may say for 't,
Ten to one, they 'll make you pay for 't.

Still, though awkward is the scrape,
There's a loop-hole to escape;
From its trouble and vexation.
End the suit by *arbitration*,
Might I venture to advise;
For a sudden compromise,
Breaking out between the parties,
Wormwood to the Attorney's heart is.

But if you are over-bold
For my counsel,—if you hold
That submission in a hero
Lowers him, at once, to *Zero*,
Luckily there yet a charm is,
(Though, in *trespass vi et armis*

Danages are often heavy),
Ere the Sheriff makes his levy,
There's a charm to save you still—
Crockford, you may file a bill.
Law to equity must yield ;
Equity, that Gorgon-shield,
To the liveliest suitor shewn,
Stiffens him at once to stone.

Bring the haughty warriors down,
Make them truckle to the Gown ;
Folks like you have no compunction,
Only move for an *injunction*,
And with charges so involve it,
That no answer can dissolve it.

If they stir an atom faster,
Have them up before a Master,
Ply them well with forms for fudge meant,
Never let them hope for judgment ;
And if, eager in the suit,
On they rush to seize the fruit,
As on cattle does a lion,
As on Juno did Ixion,
Let their arms, in vain held out,
Only clasp a cloud of doubt,
Raised, to check their daring love
Of dispatch, by Chancery's Jove ;
While the' avenging pangs they feel
Of his slow-revolving wheel.

Think what anguish and surprise,
Mingled, in their bosoms rise,
Chill their hearts, and glaze their eyes,
When my Lord, to cure their vapours,
Talks of *taking home the papers*,
Where, perchance, his Lordship weighs them,
Reads perchance,—perchance *mislays them* !

Term by term, and day by day,
Wear their patience thus away,
Till arrives that consummation
Of their woe, the long Vacation.
Drained by sums already lost,
Scared by dreams of future cost,

You may curb these men of war
With their own Solicitor ;
Or, if Fortitude endures
Aught more terrible, with *yours*.
Think, if these should charge together
On the baffled suitors, whether
Proof there 'd be in gun or blade
'Gainst two Chancery-bills unpaid !

Thus tormented let them be ;
Feeing ever, still to fee,
For a lingering last decree ;
While till doomsday off you stave it
With a *special affidavit*.

'Think in oaths what magic spells lie !

Think of Beaufort *versus* Wellesley !

Friends and foes you may defy,

'Thus intrenched in Chancery.

'Tis like Doubting-Castle, where

Dwelt that giant-form, Despair,

Save that all the luckless clients,

Though his namesakes, are not giants,

But, by heavy fees exacted,

Into pigmy-forms contracted.

Can a standard here be planted ?

Hence, avaunt !—The ground's enchanted.

Warlike engines are in vain,
Storm, or sap, or *coup-de-main*.²
Guards, you might with less ado,
Win a second Waterloo,
Than a victory achieve
Here, without the Conjuror's ~~leave~~.

He can keep you all at bay
With one magic word—*Delay*.
Send you to the right about
By two syllables—*I doubt*.
So impregnable a fort
Ne'er held out ~~as~~ Eldon's court.
Europe's armies would be beat
Matched with Eldon, and—the *Fleet*!

But it matters not a straw
Whether Equity or Law,
(Blessings both, but somewhat dear)
Conquers, or is conquered here ;
If the Man of dice and cards
Proves too many for the Guards ;
Or if they, of life and limb
Prodigal, should master him ;
If, in short, the case that's strongest
Triumphs, or the purse that's longest.

These are trifles, light as air,
Little worth our Hero's care.
Crockford, conscious of *the ready*,
To his darling purpose steady,

Nay, each hour determined more,
Having ruined, to restore,
Hastes to be a man or mouse,
Made or marred, at Crockford-House.

See, the destined ground is cleared !
See, the scaffolding is reared !
Carts on carts the gulf environ,
Fraught with timber, stone, and iron.
Piles of bricks from every quarter
Pay their court to hods of mortar,
And, in spite of wintry weather,
Lovingly are linked together.

Welcome (here 's a fig for lawyers)
Masons, carpenters, and sawyers,
Heaving, pulleying, chipping, craning,
Thumping, hammering, and planing,
Never grudging, night or day,
Double tasks for double pay.

Soon shall spring (for Crockford dashes),
Like a phenix from its ashes,
Like a rising exhalation,
Such a plan, and elevation !
Such a fabric, such a building,
Rich in marble, stucco, gilding,

Pannels varnished, mouldings burnished ;
All so fitted up, and furnished ;
Monstrous hive for making honey !
Tempting trap for catching money !

But while, mushroom-like, it grows,
Folks get frightened, and suppose
That, for ends so full of evil,
Crockford 's dealing with the Devil ;
And, from greediness of pelf,
To that fiend has sold himself
Who will, at no distant day,
Claim, and carry him away !

They down-face you that his master
Scarcely for himself built faster,
When he of metallic scum
Fashioned Pandemonium,³
Than his slave, they can't tell how,
Builds, as if by magic, now ;
So that any one may spy
Satan's finger in the pye.

Thus, they add, as if they 'd seen 'em
Sign the deed, 'it runs between 'em.
That of masonry or brick-work,
(Being anxious to make quick work)

Crockford covenants to lay
Certain cubits every day ;
Stipulating so, they guess,
Just to save appearances ;
While the Devil, maturely weighing
What the house is meant for—playing,
And that then and there, the guests
Most perform his high behests,
And promote his interests,
Duly promises to lay,
(Reckoning on the' aforesaid Play),
Every night, in order true,
For each Crockford-cubit, two.⁴
Both performing thus in turn,
To complete the whole concern,

As agreed, if not so soon

As the end of May, in June.

To the contract, as it stood,

Crockford set his hand in blood ;

Satan, with a pen of flame

Dipped in sulphur, did the name.

" Sealed," quoth Satan, Crockford shivered

As he stammered forth, " delivered."

And his terror scarce was banished

When the other party—*vanished!*

Such the tale, of little credit.

'Twas a burning shame to spread it ;

To encourage a report
So malicious ev'n in sport.
'Twas a calumny for spite meant,
And, if dealt with by indictment,
Though 'twere true as is the Bible,
More, *on that account*, a libel,
Say the jury, on their oath,
* 'Gainst the Devil and Crockford both.
I, for one, though some receive it
All for gospel, don't believe it ;
Or that any sprite but Mammon
Helps him on.—The rest is *gammon*.

Yet, my friend, though ~~he~~ and you
Never had an interview ;

And hereafter, ~~any~~

Most devoutly, ~~any~~

Though no ~~any~~

Danger here, ~~any~~

Pause a moment, ~~any~~

Break, ~~any~~

Out-men, ~~any~~

But 'tis ~~any~~

~~any~~

~~any~~

~~any~~

~~any~~

~~any~~

~~any~~

Which, neat covers and preserves,
 I rowns aloft, to try the nerves
 Of those persistent teachers
 On all round, black, and black,
 In the dark, and dark, and dark,
 Wage with the dark, and dark, and dark.

How you, and how, and how, and how,
 When the dark, and dark, and dark,
 Gave the dark, and dark, and dark,
 And the dark, and dark, and dark,
 Confronted the dark, and dark, and dark,
 How you, and how, and how, and how,
 Safe within the dark, and dark, and dark.

Where your dextrous course you shaped
So discreetly, and escaped
From such perils as, in print,
'Twere ungracious ev'n to hint !
Now, pursuit may well grow warmer ;
Now, you are your own informer.

Wherefore all this fuss and flourish ?
Friends are lukewarm, foes are currish. .
Those would hardly stir to right you ;
These move heaven and earth to spite you.
Make not such a noise and shew :
If so loud your trumpets blow,
Dread the fate of *Jericho*.

At their sounding, every wall
Of your citadel may fall.

Take my counsel, do not brag ;
Keep your cat within her bag ;
Comely whiskers, velvet paws,
Ill conceal her teeth and claws.
Nought avails her coat and purring,
If she keeps the mice from stirring.

With so nourishing a diet
Can't you chew the cud in quiet ?
Unmolested would you eat
Never, never, cry roast meat ;

Nor, at meals, proclaim aloud
Plenty to a hungry crowd,
Who begin, perhaps, by staring,
But, at last, insist on sharing.
While you summon many a guest
In your pompous halls to feast,
Tremble at the Bow-Street *Harpies*,
With their nails unclean, and sharp eyes,
Birds obscene, whose sight and touch
May not please you over-much.

Here, I fancy you replying
By a truth there's no denying,
"Men *have* gambled, and they will,
Spite of lectures, gamble still.

So that any speculation
Has, in Play, a sure foundation."
Granted.—But in every case,
Pray consider time and place :
If you weigh not manners, men,
Where you lay your traps, and *when*,
Your conclusion 's not exact.—
Still, by long experience backed,
Still, your *major* is a fact.

Wise and simple, grave and gay,
Have been lured and led away
Captives, by the charms of Play.
There 's no punishing or shaming
Certain people out of gaming ;

'Tis among the plagues that ravage
Countries civilized and savage,
In its blind, impartial rage
Sparing neither sex nor age.
Here, 'tis a resistless passion,
There, a pastime or a fashion.
Some it maddens and bewitches
With the hope of sudder riches:
Some would fain, because too well off,
Stave *Ennui*, that demon-spell, off;
And by Play's excitement strive
Just to keep themselves alive.
Moralists may preach or wonder;
'Tis as ancient quite as thunder.

Nor imagine that the vice
Is confined to cards and dice ;
That its power is felt or shewn
In saloons or clubs alone.
Practised our desires to move
In as various forms as Love,
Shifting to a hundred shapes,
Here some grave pursuit it apes ;
Here performs some sordid task
In a domino and mask.

All who, dashing, over-trade,
All by whom a wager's laid ;
All who deal in those affairs
Called, from sharing nothing,—shares,

(As a grove all classic men do

Lucus term, a non lucendo);

All who would their incomes double,

By some specious two-faced bubble,

And secure, by hums on hums,

Bonuses and premiums;

All the bulls and bears that range,

Shaped like men, the Stock-exchange,

And, without remorse, would martyr

Half mankind for half a quarter;

All who, preying on the nation,

Call their rapine speculation;

Who by accident advance,

And in all things trust to chance;

Scheme-contrivers, money-scamblers,

All are errant downright gamblers.

Who, but smiling, hear and see

Folks like some at least of these,

Thus untouched by love of gold,

Thus "in conscious virtue bold,"

With uplifted hands and eyes

Feigning anger, or surprise,

With severe and Spartan air

Sitting in the moral chair,

When at others' sins they stare

With sterner eyes than those who

When they dare the lash to lay
So relentlessly on Play,
And to wonder what retards
God's revenge on dice and cards !

Softly, Stoics, if you please.
Truth, profaned by lips like these,
Sounds but like a lottery-puff.
Play, we own, is bad enough,
With its see-saw loss and gain ;—
Every mischief 's in its train.
In the human breast, we grant
'Tis a poisonous deadly plant,

One whose growth is sure to smother
And o'ershadow every other ;
As for miles round Java's *Upas*,
('T'wont among us, now, for true pass)
Nothing, as the fable goes,
Either moves, or breathes, or grows.

Arm against it Women's beauty,
Love, Ambition, Fame, and Duty,
Play, unconquered since the Fall,
Play will triumph o'er them all ;
'Tis no easier to defend it,
Than by any law to end it ;
Vain attempt, and sure to fail. 'Tis
Like a host of other frailties,

Which, if rooted up, no doubt,
We should better be without.

But are Doctors such as these
Fit to combat the disease?
Men who, in a different form,
Hug the vice at which they storm?
May n't we whisper to these elves,
Sage physicians, cure yourselves?
Others justly may condemn
Who offend not, but in *them*
'Tis, whatever the pretence,
Sheer, unblushing impudence,
If its *real* name you want :—
Sheer hypocrisy and cant !

Be it then as you contend.—

Play, no doubt, my venturous friend,

Is an universal passion ;

Still be cautious, while ^{*}you dash on,

What a scheme you risk your cash on.

Freely, we confess, you bleed,

And would; ten to one, succeed,

Were the' adventure French or Flemish ;

But, at ~~home~~, we're somewhat squeamish ;

Not what *is*, but what *appears*,

Here, alarms our eyes and ears.

While the question we are blinking,

And, as is our custom, winking

Hard, though manifest the case is
As the nose on all our faces,
Crockford, are you not a ninny, an
Errant, reckless Carthaginian,
Thus our Roman eyelids paring,
At your deeds to set us staring,
When, through indolence or kindness,
We've so long been shamming blindness?

If you, for your strange vocation,
Not content with *toleration*,
Aim at *full emancipation*,
If you from the monster, Play
Rashly tear the veil away,

As the' impostor-prophet cast
His, in triumph, off at last ;
(So 'tis written in that book
Of enchantment, *Lalla Rookh*) ;
Should you, to unseal the eyes
Of its abject votaries,
Treat them even to a glance
Of its hideous countenance,
Crockford, while you ape *Mokanna*,
Dread the Acts of *George* and *Anna* !⁵

Wherefore hurry up a mansion
Of such splendour and expansion,
Wherefore build so proud a fane
To the greedy God of gain ?

Nursed in darkness, scared by light,
Play should, here, *play least in sight*,
And, ensconced behind a screen,
If it blushes, “blush unseen.”

Though, from policy or chance,
It has thriven, and thrives in France,
Where unbroken custom backs it,
Law permits, and statesmen tax it;
Crockford, even *you* must grant,
Here, 'tis but a sickly plant,
Stunted oft, and oft laid low,
By the nipping squalls that blow,
Fitful, from the *Street of Bow*.

Ev'n our darling *shirts* and *tickets*,
Long afflicted with the rickets,
Lingering, spite of many a vote,
With the rattles in the throat,
After all their struggles past,
Calmly have expired at last ;
And there's left not breath enough
In the Lottery—for a *puff*!

Wherefore conjure up accusers
In the testy tribe of losers,
Who compose, your annals say,
Just nine-tenths of those who play?

Why instruct the thickest skull
In the secret of the *pull*?
Are your customers so dull?
Who can doubt, but Nature's fools,
From the value of the tools,
And the instruments they see,
What the precious work must be?
Something you were known to touch,
But we never dreamed *how much*,
Nor, till such a pile was shewn us,
Guessed the value of your *bonus*.

Every brick and stone that's laid,
Whispers of your prosperous trade:

When we see yon^{*} walls aspire
Higher every day and higher ;
When we view that stately front,
Ominous to those who punt,
Parting, by some scores of feet,
Hoby's boots from Bennet-Street,
'This, at once, the veil withdraws ;
From th' effect we judge the cause,
Sure that all the boundless cost,
Gained by *you*, by *us* was lost.

He, the Chief, whose armies went
Rough-shod o'er the Continent,
Who, insatiate of renown,
'Thrones and Kingdoms crumbled down,

Deeming he had nothing gained
While unconquered aught remained,
By the flames of Moscow crossed
Mourned his fame and empire lost.
Ynt, though all confess your sway,
Sovereign o'er the realms of Play,
C'rockford, if you 're wise, refrain
From this dangerous new campaign.
Spite of your achievements, tremble
Lest *your* fate *his* fate resemble,
Lest the Palace in our view
Should a *Kremlin* prove to you.
What though, beaten, you surrender?
We are ruth^eless and untender,

And have Forts, within a mile,
Strong as St. Helena's isle.

Mighty Man of cards and dice,
Take a real friend's advice ;
One who, though he never threw in,
Fain would shelter you from ruin.
Mine's a maxim soon expressed,
Loss the first is loss the best.
Don't, or I shall think you mad,
Throw good money after bad ;
Don't, thou prodigal of purse,
Farther go, to fare the worse ;
On the precipice's brink
Still you 've time to pause and think.

If your noddle be not too-dense
For a single grain of prudence,
Now, your self-command recover,
One step more, and all is over.

Haste, ere Winter yield to Spring,
Haste, and strike your scaffolding.
Though you've set the World a gazing
At the structure you are raising,
Though so proud an elevation
Makes what's called—a *strong sensation*,
Keeping, like the Funds of late,
People in a "feverish state,"
Let it, like the Bear and Fiddle,
Off be broken in the middle;

Let the speculation drop ;
Bid your swarming workmen stop ;
They may grumble, sneer, or scoff,
Never mind, but pay them off.

Or, should pausing here, perchance,
Cost as much as to advance,
'Twould be easy to diminish
Your expenses, ere you finish
What you rashly mean to build—
Ere its destiny 's fulfilled,
Ere to such a size you swell it,
Un-bedevil, and *un-hell* it,
From a *Play-devoted* cavern
To a club, hotel, or tavern.

Crowning thus St. James's heights,
"Twill be popular ; and *White's*,
If you delicately break it
To the Managers, and make it
Worth their while, perhaps may take it.

Not intending to distress you,
Not in malice I address you.
Little wisdom lies in scorning
Mine, a well-meant friendly warning.
Dread yon treacherous hollow sea,
Dread the breakers on your lea ;
If you would not be the sport
Of foul weather, make for port ,

Or, in plainer words, retire ,
To your snug domestic fire ;
To your safe and tight-built ark,
Anchored in the Regent's Park.

Wherefore dread too still a life ?
You have children, and a wife ;
Can't you trust to *her* for strife ?
And to little girls and boys,
Romping up and down, for noise ?
Scarce, amid these " natural shocks,"
Need you miss the dice and box,
Or, in scenes so little dull,
Murmur, though you lose *the pull*.

There, aloof from tradesmen's bills,
Gaze upon the Sister-hills ;
Musing, as you lift the sash,
On M'Adam, and on Nash.
And when Eastern fogs and blights
Mar these innocent delights,
When encroaching smoke from Town
Bids you pull the window down,
Then, for sweet discourse you 'll find,
With a neighbour to your mind,
Subjects tempting to dilate on ;
Such as we can *all* debate on.

Sheltered then from wind and rain,
Talk of Portugal and Spain ;

Of that driveller in command
Over bigots, Ferdinand ;
Of the Lisbon-constitution,
Problem of no quick solution ;
And at your discretion mix
These with corn and Catholics ;
With protections, prohibitions,
Fierce debates, and strong petitions.
Next, discuss, for a cephalic,
Notes and currency metallic ;
Or the crisis which portends
War 'twixt rents and dividends ;
War, where moneyed men or landed
Must be scratched, and *may* be stranded.

Hopeful topics such as these
You may handle at your ease ;
Topics, on which every mother's
Son may bore himself—and others.

Or, if later in the year,
Posting down to Cambridgeshire,
On whose plains, by Fortune's care,
You 've another *pied-à-terre*,
Lay your bets, and hedge, and lark it
With the jockeys of Newmarket ;
With your wonted welcome greeting,
Every Spring and Autumn-meeting,
All the dear familiar faces
Seldom missed at any races.

So no Big-wigs shall alarm you,⁶
And no *information* harm you ;
So shall duns unpaid forbear you ;
So shall nothing ill come near you ;
So, whate'er you spend or save,
Peace and safety shall you have.

Lay no longer on, Macduff,
Prudence whispers, " hold—enough !"
Do what every creature tries
To accomplish—*realize* ;
And, intent on winding up,
Take no heed how people sup.
Let them bet, and win, and lose,
How, and when, and where they choose ;

Let them celebrate their orgies
In St. James's, or St. George's;
Be they many, be they few,
So they harbour not with you.

Musc, the rambling course we've run
Might be lengthened, but I've done
Gently, as I hope, my task;—
And if sterner critics ask,
Seeming, in a case like this,
Whips and scorpions not amiss,

Why I have not thought it fitter
For my purpose to be bitter ;
Have not opened every sluice
Of all possible abuse
(Since good counsel's thrown away)
On the votaries of Play—
Hear my answer. Nought reclaims
People less than calling names,
Be it with the pen or tongue,
Be it written, said, or sung.
Since, could any vice or failing
Have been rooted out by railing,
We, though men in outward shew,
Had been angels long ago.

They who deal in "speaking daggers"
Have no reason to be braggers
Of success in what they do ;
What's so very easy too ,
Has no chance of being new.
Every one can be abusive :
There's no privilege exclusive
To protect their hopeful labours,
Who, in *showing up* their neighbours,
Mingle truth enough with lies,
In their batch of calumnies,
Just to make the ferment rise.
None can fail, and none excels
On that paltry peal of bells

Through whose belfry he who ranges,
In a trice, may ring the changes.

Reader, if you're not with me,
Listen to another plea.
Could I sweep, from Earth, away
Every Proteus-form of Play ;
Could I wield, in such a cause,
All the thunder of the laws,
And to death, or stripes, or fetters,
Doom its aiders and abettors,
Hunted so through every shape,
That no culprit should escape,
Think what ruin would be hurled
On the heads of half the World !

No, if justice must be done,
Let it be on all, or none.
I, averse to kill so many,
Point no *blunderbuss* at any ;
But, contented to resort
To less murderous arms, for sport,
Pepper, since they can't be all shot,
Those ~~that~~ crow the most, with *small shot*.

Wherefore should I scold and rate,
Like some nymph of Billingsgate,
Those who, slaves to cards and dice,
Revel in their favorite vice ?
Wherefore, by so fierce a tone,
Spoil their temper and ~~my~~ *own* ?—

C'an I *thus* reform produce?
Who grows moral from abuse
Destined, now-a-days, to fall,
Like th' impartial rain, on all ;
Like the evils every creature
Suffers from our common nature.
Whether innoeent or not,
Every one must stand that shot ;
Must an epidemy bear
“ General as the casing air.”

Wherefore, when the laws are broken,
Brand the' offender with a token,
Who, like old Astolpho's groom,⁷
Shorn, and trembling for his doom,

Comes, and slyly, in the dark,
Sets on all the self-same mark ?

To be vilified and hissed
You have only to exist.
'Tis the atmpsphere we breathe in ;
'Tis a cauldron all must seeth in ;
'Tis a plague-spot in the Land ; all
Suffer from, or deal in scandal.
For, since Avarice first and Spite
Bred that wolfish Appetite,
Stalking through the world 'tis seen
Like the Monster *Frankenstein*,
And, however loathed and hated;
Must be fed, when once created.

Libelled, on pretence of news,
Scourged by critics in reviews,
Each is in his turn a martyr
By the day, the week, or quarter.
Once you hardly felt their lashes,
Screened by friendly stars and dashes,
Or, what cloked the mischief better,
Only here and there a letter.
While the meaning thus was muzzled,
Many a Beau was sorely puzzled
Whether 'twas a *word* to say,
Or a *Sum in Algebra*.
“ Plastered rubric on the walls,
Now, you stand in Capitals.”

There, your name, no lustre lacking,
Shines like *Hunt's* or *Warren's* blacking,
Or like him of cures so speedy
Safe and secret—*Dr. Eady*.

Since these Heroes of the pen
War with women thus, and men,
Since their viewless arrows strike
Every head and heart alike,
Why should they have power to vex,
Grieve, or injure either sex ?
Thus from post to pillar hunted,
Patience tired, and feelings blunted,
Say, what armour of defence
Have we but—indifference ?

But to live unhurt in slander,
As, in fire, the Salamander ?

Reader, *be* what you *appear*.*
Keep your fame and conscience clear,
And, regardless of their frown
Laugh, or rather *live them down*.
If encompassed with a skin
Somewhat sensitive and thin,
At their stripes you ever winced,
Steeled at length, at length convinced
That, with many faults or few,
(Since whate'er you say or do
They are certain to condemn)
You've no chance of pleasing *them*,

Scorn to taste the poisoned chalice
Lifted to your lips by Malice ;
Let no slanderer stir your bile,
Read his libels with a smile,
Or unheeded on the shelf
Let them lie, and—please *yourself*.

NOTES.

CANTO I.

Note 1, page 1, lines 4, 5.

———— *wondering in the street*
At the chasm in front of White's.

THE chasm is here described as it appeared in the beginning of last November, just before the fall of the Guards' Club-House. The progress since made in filling it up with a splendid building has been so rapid as to excuse, if it does not justify, the popular suspicion recorded in the Second Canto, p. 67, lines 7, 8.

Note 2, page 1, line 8.

———— “ *at alteration yawning.*”

———— If the' affrighted globe
Should yawn at alteration ———

SHAKSP. *Othello.*

Note 3, page 5, line 13, &c.

Like the seven Miss Flamboroughs, &c.

“ As for our neighbour Flamborough's family, there were seven of them, and they were drawn with seven oranges; a thing quite out of taste, no variety in life, no composition in the world.”—*Vicar of Wakefield*, Chap. xvi.

Note 4, page 8, lines 3, 4.

————— *when he nabs*

Higher prey by means of crabs.

By means of the *deuce-ace*, the effect of which is described in the Second Canto.

Note 5, page 18, lines 9, 10, 11, 12.

Each who is not at his post,

Thinks a dozen throws are lost,

And, in fancy, thumps, while able,

Heavily the absent table.

————— *pereunt vestigia mille*

Ante fugam, absentemque ferit gravis ungula campum.

Note 6, page 20, line 7.

————— *The Vampire,* —————

A name given by Naturalists to a Bat of enormous size which infests many Tropical countries. “He is,” says Ulloa, “the most expert blood-letter in the world; soothing the patient, and prolonging his slumbers, during the operation, by the gentle motion of his wings.”

Note 7, page 22, line 6.

Sit—like Theseus or the Speaker.

————— *Sedet, æternumque sedebit*

Infelix Theseus —————

VING.

CANTO II.

Note 1, page 57, lines 10 and 11.

——— *a sudden compromise*

Breaking out between the parties.

An expression borrowed from an Attorney in Ireland, who, when asked how a lawsuit of which he had the management was going on, replied, "Why it *was* going on as well as possible, but, unluckily, a compromise *broke out* between the parties."

Note 2, page 63, line 6.

Storm, or sap, or coup-de-main.

"Take Antwerp, Sir, by a *Coup-de-main!*" exclaimed Mr. Windham, in a debate on the Walcheren expedition, "why you might as well expect to take the Court of Chancery by a *Coup-de main.*"

Note 3, page 60, lines 3 and 4.

——— *of metallic scum*

Fashioned Pandemonium.

——— *a second multitude*

With wondrous art founded the massy ore,
Severing each kind, and scummed the bullion dross.

.
Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
Rose like an exhalation.

PARADISE LOST, Book 1.

Note 4, page 69, line 13.

For each Crockford-cubit, two.

Les Genies obeïrent, et quand les ouvriers clevaient, durant le jour, la tour, d'une coudée, ils y en ajoutoient *deux*, pendant la nuit.—VATHEK, page 6. London edition.

Note 5, page 87, line 2.

Dread the Acts of George and Anna.

Stat. Anne 9, c. 14. and several acts of George II.

Note 6, page 100, line 11 et sequent.

So no Big-wigs shall alarm you, &c.

No exorciser harm thee,
Nor no witchcraft charm thee,
Ghosts unlaid forbear thee,
Nothing ill come near thee.

SHAKSP. *Cymbeline*.

Gentle Lady, may thy grave
Peace and quiet ever have.

MILTON.

Note 7, page 107, line 11.

— *like old Astolpho's groom.*

The story is in Boccaccio.

A RHYMER IN ROME.

1826.

She has her praise.—Now mark a spot or two
Which so much beauty would do well to cleanse.

COWPER.

A RHYMER IN ROME.

ROMANS, vouchsafe to tell us why

(Since how should Vandals such as *we* know)

You hang your linen out to dry

Along the VIA BABBUINO?

This “decent drapery” on the wall

You mean, perhaps, to make the most of,

And thus, at once, exhibit all

The cleanliness you have to boast of.

But, ROMANS, on a main approach

To all the marvels of your City,

Why let such nuisances encroach,

To “sear our eye-balls?”—’Tis n’t pretty.

Say, do your walls no wastes enclose,

No open unfrequented spaces,

That dangling petticoats and hose

Must swing through all your public places?

Past are your pomps—The laurelled brow,

The captive-train, the war-stained banners.

Only your *laundries* triumph now.

Is this your taste? Are these your manners?

Howe'er such spectacles may strike you,

We strangers think them sad transgressions.

ROMANS, we willingly would like you ;

But much depends on first impressions.

We reach the gates of ROME. Delight,

And Wonder on our fancy seizes.

We enter. What a sorry sight !

Wet night-caps, stockings, and chemises !

Perhaps, were this the sole assault

Upon our feelings, few would mind it.

We might forgive a *single* fault,

But worse, much worse, remains behind it.

Look through your Town. On every side
Magnificence is marred by meanness,
Pollution matched with pomp and pride,
And splendour wedded to uncleanness.

Where'er the curious stranger walks,
Base relics without end or number,
Fish-bones, dead dogs, and cabbage-stalks,
At every step, his path encumber.

Wherefore, our senses to appal
Stands an inscription such as that, say,
Which ROME displays on many a wall,
“ *Immondezzaio in Piazza?* ”

That *there* the rubbish may be thrown ?

Why, ROMANS, 'tis not worth the pothei.

Among your streets, I've scarcely known

One place much cleaner than another.

In vain you boast of all that's rare ;

Domes, columns, and those glorious fountains

Whose Naiads come, to cool your air,

O'er long-drawn arches, from the mountains.

In vain pure water o'er the brink

Of many a marble conch is dashing ;

You find it excellent to drink,

But never dream 'twill serve for washing.

Come, let it overflow. You smile,

And scorn the element's assistance ;

So that, methinks, 'twas scarce worth while

To have it brought from such a distance.

Why has not every house a rill

To purify its entrance fusty ?

Or wherefore must the PINCIAN HILL,

Crowned with two gushing founts, be dusty ?

Should we the VATICAN disdain,

Or cease to haunt thy dome, ST. PETER,

Could we approach those marvels twain

Through avenues a little sweeter ?

Fie, ROMANS, fie ! His favourite ground

Once more could old AGRIPPA be on,

Mid yonder offals heaped around,

Say, would he know his own PANTHEON ?

What churches, palaces, are yours !

Yet hope not to escape my strictures,

While darkness veils, and dirt obscures

Their altars, frescos, statues, pictures.

While to the damp unfreshened walls

They cling, as they have clung for ages,

Mere traps for catching strangers' *Puuls*,

In aid of half-paid servants' wages.

Like Harem-Beauties kept for pride,

Whose masters cold and uncaressing

Guard them, to shew the difference wide

Between enjoying and possessing.

Hark, in your private ear a word,

We'll whisper it, to spare your blushes.

Pray, ROMANS, have you never heard

Of mops and pails, of brooms and brushes?

We've found them, ages since, at home,

The scourge and dread of every slattern;

And, for your courtesies at ROME,

Perhaps could let you have a pattern.

A sovereign cure they are for dirt.

Now don't conclude that travelled men lie,
Because, with no design to hurt

Your feelings, we would have you cleanly.

Your ancestors have done their parts ,

They were brave spirits—nay divine ones.

Suppose *you* try the coarser arts ;

You 'll never match them in the fine ones.

Set up Commissioners of Sewers ;

'Twould stop the mouth of many a jiber,

Who asks why 'TULLUS' work endures,

Or why your walls o'erhang the TYBER ?

Repair your buildings.—'Tis a task

Ev'n modern Cardinals might master.

Clothe your bare bricks.—I do but ask

A little white-wash, paint, and plaster.

Brush up your shabby tattered streets,

Which seem all decency to brave meant ;

Close-haul your spouts ; and if such feats

Don't *quite* exhaust you, mend your pavement.

Pray, what is your Police about ?

Scenting imaginary dangers ;

Hunting sham CARBONARI out,

Or, for their passports, plaguing strangers.

Police !—The name's a mere excuse

For Tyranny in fretful movement ;

A stepping-stone for all abuse,

A stumbling-block to all improvement.

‘ Pleasant’ the whole concern, ‘ but wrong ;’

At home one should not like it,—should one ?

For every crooked purpose strong,

And impotent for every good one.

‘ Twere well it would exert at home

Its ultra-apostolic vigour,

And on the sordid streets of ROME

Let loose a little of its rigour.

But 'gainst the stream in vain one strives.

Think of convincing or reclaiming

A childish race, who pass their lives

In *Carnavale*-ing, and *Carême*-ing !

A race enthralled by holy hums,

* 'Twixt sins and penance ever moving,

Praying and pelting sugar-plums,

Confessing, masking, fasting, loving.

Strung, puppet-like, on priestly wires,

To the same tune for ever dancing,

Sons tread the footsteps of their sires,

Receding never, nor advancing. *

Ancient and modern art in vain

Conspire to shed their glories round them ;

While Superstition, with her chain

Of adamantine links, has bound them.

Their land lies waste—The very air

(Old ROME could ne'er havethus bequeathed it)

Is grown, alas ! the worse for wear,

Since lazy modern ROME has breathed it.

Circling her towers, for leagues around,

Rank grass and reeds untrodden cover,

And oozing waters taint the ground,

And treacherous vapours o'er it hover.

All sad, all silent ! O'er the ear

No sound of cheerful toil is swelling.

Earth has no quickening spirit here,

Nature no charm, and Man no dwelling !

Haply, a sun-beam, through the gloom,

Some mouldering time-worn tower discloses ;

Or marks the melancholy tomb,

Wherein some nameless chief reposes.

Fierce tribes have raised, as here they trod,

The war-cry, Woe to the defeated !

Here has the Churchman's barbarous code

What war began, in peace completed.

He spake, and o'er the prostrate land . .

Came cold and creeping Desolation ;

Blind fruitless Faith, at his command,

Was piety, and Sloth salvation.

Then cowed monks arose, and saints

Absolving sins at settled prices,

And all that Song or Story paints

Of ghostly legends and devices ;

And convents where, by vows enshained,—

But hold—The Bard will teach us better

What their “relentless walls” contained,

The Bard of Eloisa's letter.

Then juggling miracles were wrought.

Poor Mortals ! in what traps and cages

Your coward-consciences were caught,

And fettered in those darkened ages.

Such is the Capital, and such

The waste that from the World divides it.

Trust me, it shocks the traveller much,

Who overlooks, or over-rides it.

On through the desert.—Move not slow,

Stranger—'tis fraught with ills to plague you :

Fevers, nay death. At least you go

Out, *grand compounder*, with an ague.

'Twas a fair fertile region once,
With towns and villages upon it ;
But here a tyrant, there a dunce,
Have ruled for ages and undone it.

Yes, 'twas a plain of some renown.
Ask not what cause could thus degrade it ;
But, musing on the triple crown,
Behold what Man, not Heaven has made it.

'Yet has ROME toiled, and fought, and bled,
Thus to be governed and protected ;
To place, as monarchs at her head,
Priest after priest—by priests elected !

Pass in review the papal ranks,

Since Popes for sovereigns first were chosen ;

What hundreds of decided blanks

To doubtful prizes—scarce a dozen !

If on a hero, now and then,

Or saint, or sage, the conclaves blunder,

Think of the weak and guilty men,

Whose hands have launched the Church's thunder

Thunder, 'tis true, the worse for wear ;

Long have we Northerns ceased to fear it :

Yet still it maddens to scare

The Southern slaves and bigots near it.

Feeble, yet absolute command !

Rome long has rued, and long shall rue it ;
For whatsoe'er one Pope has planned,
The next is certain to undo it.

Fate served her once.—A conquering Prince

In War's wild train some blessings brought her.
But how has she been busied since ?
Unlearning all the French had taught her.

No change to beautify the town,

No project, if it was the foeman's,
Will with her rulers now go down:—
Is not this somewhat silly, ROMANS ?

He, mole-like, burrowed under ground,

And, as he delved, his zeal grew stronger ;

Much did he clear, and much he found :

So therefore *you* will dig no longer.

He would not suffer you to stab,

Whatever grudge you had *in petto*,

Nor on your friend, or foe, or drab,

Draw forth the ready, keen stiletto.

But times are changed. The ruffian now,

Unchecked, his darling weapon seizes :

And, in each jealous drunken row,

Murders just when and whom he pleases.

Now broken is the Gallic chain,

Too strong for hands like yours to sever ;

And, ROMANS, you may be as vain,

And base, and barbarous as ever.

Take courage. Things are getting worse,

All old abuses are returning ;

And priests who lately could but curse

May be again indulged in burning.

The French were given to spoil and strife ;

So, to replace them, the Banditti

Have warred on property and life,

Within a furlong of your city,

Scorning Man's strength, and Woman's tears ,-

Fellows who think it not unhandsome

To balance with a captive's ears

The least abatement of his ransom.

.

But these are men. The softer sex,

Perchance, for gentleness alone meant,

Their fury calms, their vengeance checks,

And for their crimes makes full atonement.

Come, then, and though 'twill put, I fear,

Your Pegasus on harder duty

Than such a jaded hack can bear,

Muse, conjure up a Roman Beauty.

No Corso-nymph, who proudly ranks

With high-born dames,—I won't describe her.

My Beauty haunts ALBANO'S banks,

Or weaves her spells beyond the TYBER ;

With eye dark flashing, ebon brow,

Free graceful limbs, and rising bosom,

Mien, stature, gait,—just fancy how

A painter or a bard would choose'em.

But oh ! what mischief in that face !

That throbbing breast what passions ravage !

How those wild glances mark a race

And form half civilised, half savage !

Methinks the Furies with their snakes,

Or Venus with her zone might gird her ;

Of fiend and goddess she partakes,

And looks at once both Love and Murder

She scorns to win or steal a heart,

Her pride disdains to snare or wire it,

Swift from her eyes the lightnings part,

And with o'erwhelming passion fire it.

Who shares her love must serve her hate,

And to be happy must be criminal,

Darkling and ambushed he must wait

On the QUIRINAL or the VIMINAL

Her signal guides the' unerring blade ;
That deed of death no tongue discloses ;
He flies—unheeded, unbetrayed,
And safe within her bower reposes.

Then, prodigal of all her charms,
Her slave-assassin she embraces,
And rests, unshrinking, in those arms
On which a rival's blood she traces.

Here pause—and think what Man must be,
How dark, relentless, and inhuman,
When pride and vengeful jealousy
Thus maddens,—thus unsexes Woman !

But, Muse, nor of the' assassin's steel,
Nor of the bolder Bandit's plunder,
'Tis thine to sing—whate'er you feel
Of anger, shame, disgust, and wonder.

Let Popes and Cardinals alone,
To hold their jubilees at leisure ;
A blest exchange for fires out-blown,
Departed power, and vanished treasure.

Shadows and forms alone are theirs,
To overawe rebellious doubt with.
But dwell he on such themes who dares.

Back to the strain we first set out with ;

And, tiptoe on FRASCATI's steep,
Or TIVOLI's romantic border,
Cry, Muse, and spare not, "ROMANS, keep
Your tattered town in better order."

Arches that span the SACRED WAY,
Columns that still adorn the FORUM,
What think you, ancient relics, say,
Of modern feeling, taste, decorum ;

Of Vandals, who, without remorse,
Turn all their cattle loose among you,
Where, at his leisure, every horse
And goat, and pig, and cow, may dung you!

Thus, must these paths be ever trod

Will no one from this scandal free 'em,

And leave one unpolluted road

'Twixt CAPITOL and COLISEUM

ROME, mighty ROME ! exhaustless mine

Of granite, porphyry, and marble,

ROME of the Cæsars, at whose shine

, An humble bard thus dares to warble,

Tell your degenerate, graceless sons,

Whose priests of manhood have bereft them

No more to mar, like Goths or Huns,

The hallowed ruins you have left them

And since, unhappily, in *name*

ROMANS they are, though not in *spirit*,

Bid them at least respect the *fame* .

And godlike glories they inherit !

THE END.

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